

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1431

State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

House Judiciary Committee

February 27, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Wendy Frosh**, and I am pleased to be able to offer testimony in strong support of **HB 1431- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)**.

I offer testimony as a health policy consultant and a long-standing advocate for access to healthcare services. I also serve as a Board member for a Federally Qualified Health Center, and for Planned Parenthood of Maryland. Both of these organizations provide a broad range of healthcare – from primary care to specialty services - often to individuals who face multiple barriers to accessing care. In those settings, our services are available regardless of an individual's ability to pay, regardless of their immigration status, and provided in a culturally sensitive manner, to improve accessibility and compliance with treatment options.

Over the past decades, as we have improved our ability to collect and share personal health information, we have realized that there is an inherent risk related to the availability of these data, and thus, an obligation to build in the strongest safeguards and ensure that health information is protected. Without that assurance, any patient is vulnerable to the misuse and abuse of their sensitive health data.

In particular, within immigrant communities, fear and uncertainty regarding how personal information is used are heightened. This often leads individuals to delay or avoid necessary healthcare services. The Maryland Data Privacy Act, HB1431, takes critical steps to build trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, are prohibited from sharing personal information, facial recognition data, and access to public facilities with federal immigration authorities unless a valid warrant is presented.

This legislation is crucial not only for protecting the privacy of all Maryland residents, but also for fostering trust between communities and public institutions. By clearly delineating the boundaries of federal immigration enforcement within our state, we promote safety and fairness, and protect the accessibility of essential healthcare services.

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 1431. Thank you.